The CIA on American Campuses: Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Editor's Note: M.I.T. has become the latest in a growing line of American universities to reexamine the relationship between the intelligence community and the academic community.[1] The M.I.T. Report provides a detailed and thoughtful discussion of some of the problems, conflicting values, and solutions. The excerpts which are reprinted below explain why the covert intelligence role is in fact a serious threat to the well-being of the academic community.

But a few words should also be said about another, related set of problems, which the Report does not deal with directly but which are reflected everywhere in its recommendations that academics exercise caution. For instance, while one recommendation that we reprint makes it clear that no one connected with M.I.T. should knowingly become a covert operative for the CIA, the Report's discussion of gray areas shows that there is a limit to what the well-intentioned academic can do in the face of the intelligence community's clandestine habits.

How, for example, is an academic to know if a State Department official who wants to chat about some foreign country is really a CIA operative using a State Department cover? And how is an academic to decide what to do when a friendly and knowledgeable contact is rumored to be a CIA agent? Or, in the case of recruitment, an academic might offer information about students to an intelligence operative using a private organization as cover. In such situations, safeguarding academic freedom depends not only on the good faith of the academic community, but on the willingness of the clandestine agencies to abide by university guidelines.

This brings us to the context in which the M.I.T. Report, like comparable sets of university guidelines around the country, appears. When Harvard University became the first institution to follow the Church Committee's recommendation and to set up guidelines for the members of its community to follow, it also became embroiled in drawn out discussions with the CIA. In these, CIA Director Stansfield Turner has made it clear that the CIA will not honor the standards set up by a university. Apparently, if the Agency can induce professors, administrators, or students knowingly to violate a university code of conduct, the CIA will do so. And that being the case, it goes without saying that the Agency's options with unwitting academics are likewise open.

The M.I.T. Report does not mention the Turner intransigence, but its discussion of gray areas implicitly acknowledges that the CIA will not cooperate with university guidelines. As it stands, the hapless academic cannot determine who is or is not a CIA agent. Only CIA agents know who they are, and if they are under instructions to disregard university guidelines, the integrity and reputation of American institutions of learning will be compromised in the world community.

And indeed, as the M.I.T. Report also points out, this is not a purely hypothetical concern. The M.I.T. community has already had the experience of foreign sources refusing to discuss matters of scholarly interest for fear that the scholar was really working for the CIA.

These excerpts are from the "Interim Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on M.I.T. and the Intelligence Agencies," published in Masssachusetts Institute of Technology Tech Talk, *April 11, 1979, Vol. 23, No. 30.*

INTERIM REPORT of the AD HOC COMMITTEE ON MIT AND THE INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES

By Kenneth Hoffman, chairman; Louis Menand III; Ascher H. Shapiro; Phyllis A. Wallace; Myron Weiner and John M. Wynne.

The MIT Report defines the critical issues:

> There are a few issues, however, which almost uniquely involve our relations with intelligence agencies, and with the Central Intelligence Agency in particular. Most of these concern the clandestine recruitment and/or surveillance of foreign citizens who are members of the MIT community. In our opinion, these are simultaneously the most serious issues we face and the most difficult ones to deal with.

The MIT Report cites responsibilities within the academic community:

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As a second principle we cite the need to maintain a high level of *mutual trust* among the members of our university community. Without it, the kind of openness we seek is not possible. We would like to comment on three aspects of the trust we should have in one another.

(i) The foundation of this trust is the knowledge that the primary dedication of each member is to the intellectual enterprise which we pursue. Hidden motives tend to break down the bonds of trust that open communication requires. This is true whether the hidden motive is the coveting of personal gain and recognition or the patriotic desire to help an outside agency gather information about other members of the community. The special kind of openness which surrounds our activities is something which requires a very special kind of dedication, a dedication which is almost total.

(ii) Members of our academic community should be able to rely on the fact that the views they express, whether they be on physics, philosophy or politics, will be judged in the community solely on the basis of their intellectual merit and will be used only as part of the intellectual enterprise. Should we become aware, for example, that some members of our community were transmitting to outside agencies political views which other members had expressed in the course of our ongoing dialogue, it would be quite destructive of trust.

[illegible] argues that we work

toward the elimination of secrecy, not only in the conduct of the intellectual enterprise but in all matters we deal with except those which are clearly private or personal. To put it simply: in general, the more things about which we are open, the more each of us will believe that openness obtains in our intellectual discourse.

Our third principle is of a different character. It concerns a basic responsibility to which we must devote special attention, because it is important for maintaining an atmosphere of openness and mutual trust: *not putting other individuals at risk or in jeopardy*. There are several ways in which we have to be careful about this, many of which apply quite broadly to our scholarly contacts, both here and abroad. We shall mention the two most basic ones now.

(i) The bonds of mutual trust which we develop become, in many cases, almost familial in nature. The private or personal information we thereby acquire about another member of the community should not be shared with others without the consent of the individual involved. We must be particularly cognizant of this in an age during which centralized information storage and retrieval are growing so rapidly. If, for example, a security clearance is conducted on an individual, it is virtually impossible for anyone to say with certainty exactly who will have access to the information gathered and (therefore) for what purpose it ultimately may be used. This is true of many less formal inquiries as well. We believe the sound posture to adopt is that the transmission of personal or private information about an individual—whether it is given to a government agency, an industrial concern, another university, or even another person—potentially exposes the individual to risks and the decision as to whether those risks are to be taken should be made by the individual involved.

(ii) The openness which surrounds communication in a university is not common to many other parts of society, nor is the style in which debate is carried out. We must, therefore, exercise caution in commenting on the views of other members of the academic community unless we comment openly and as part of the on-going intellectual discourse. A portion of the views which one of us has about nuclear power plants, recombinant DNA or Karl Marx may be used by others in unpredictable ways. The transmission of an individual's views, especially out of context, can expose the individual to risks. Let each individual decide whether the risks should be taken.

The MIT Report on participation in covert operations:

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There is one possible limitation on consulting for an intelligence agency which we think should be addressed institutionally. *We do not think that any member of the MIT community should (knowingly) act as an agent for an intelligence organization.* This point will be made several more times in this report, when we discuss Briefing/Debriefing, Recruitment, and Surveillance. It arises in connection with consulting in cases where the consultant passes from the role of advisor/analyst to the role of information gatherer, i.e. the agent for gathering intelligence: "On your next trip to Oz, why not bring back the following pieces of information we need in addition to the things you need for your scholarly work?"—that sort of thing. It is our belief that engaging in such activity places an academic in a compromised position. His or her presence and "assignment" will be known to US government personnel in the other country, activities probably will be monitored and thus scholarly freedom compromised. We are well aware that there are gray areas in this type of matter, and we want to discuss these with members of the MIT community. But we feel strongly that the general principle is sound: none of us at MIT should act as agents for an intelligence organization, because the bonds of mutual trust we depend on will thereby be weakened.

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New Documents

CIA/POLICY ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH JOURNALISTS/MATERIAL SENT TO INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEES; 1973-1976; 47 pages. After litigation under FOIA, these documents were released to Judith Miller in response to a request for all material on CIA use of journalists sent to the House and Senate Intelligence Committees and the Rockefeller Commission. The file consists mostly of memoranda organizing the Agency's response to Senate Select Comm. requests for information, but also includes statements of CIA policy. Certain comments in the file raise the possibility that CIA contacts with journalists were more extensive than reported to the Committees. (Order CNSS Library No. C-47, $4.70/copy)

CIA/RESISTANCE/PEACE AND FREEDOM PARTY; 1968-1974: 85 pages. This file was obtained by the Peace and Freedom Party under FOIA. The party was an object of CIA domestic surveillance under Project Resistance. This file shows that more than 50,000 names of PFP members from a single [illegible] were sent to Resistance; the figure given by the Church Committee was 12-16,000 names nationwide. These indexes were retained at least as late as May 1974. (Order CNSS Library No. C-46, $8.50/copy)

DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY (DIA) DOCUMENTS ON NATIONAL SECURITY NEWSLEAKS SUBMITTED TO THE SENATE INTELLIGENCE COMMITTEE; 1973-1977; 71 pages. This file, released to CNSS through the FOIA, contains nine instances of apparent national security newsleaks to Fred S. Hoffman and other reporters. In each case the original news story is reproduced, followed by records of DoD investigations. The source of the leaks was not located in any of the eight cases found to involve unauthorized disclosures of classified information. (Order CNSS Library No. A-17, $7.10/copy)

DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN "COVERT ACTION IN CHILE 1963-1973"; September 1970 and undated; 11 pages. This file contains three CIA documents released to CNSS through the FOIA which describe events in Chile during September 1970. The reports describe alleged attempts by the Chilean Communist Party to take over media outlets, splits within the Christian Democratic Party, the [illegible] character and career. (Order CNSS Library No. C-31, $1.10/copy)

FBI/MEDIA MANIPULATION/INFORMANTS/WILLIAM TURNER; July 1962-August 1973; 123 pages. William Turner is a former Special Agent who was dismissed from the FBI in 1961 for his poor attitude toward Hoover and the Bureau. Subsequently he made a career as an author, writing extensively (and critically) about the FBI. These documents, obtained under the FOIA, focus on the Bureau's 11-year long attempt to discredit Turner and his writings. (Order CNSS Library No. I-18, $12.30/copy)

FBI/REQUEST FOR MAIL COVER ON SWP; January 1973; 5 pages. These documents, released through discovery in *Paton v. LaPrade*, consist of FBI memoranda and a formal request for a mail cover from L. Patrick Gray to the U.S. Postal Service. The stated purpose of the cover is to develop general information about the SWP and its contacts, rather than to gather evidence of crime. (Order CNSS Library No. I-30, $0.50/copy)

These documents are available from the Center for National Security Studies Library. Prepaid orders only. For complete list of available documents, order Abstracts, p. 15.

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